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13 March 1964

SUBJECT: The Weekly Survey of Cold War Crisis Situations

1. This publication was undertaken by the Director and the USIB in August 1961 in response to a request by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and General Maxwell Taylor, then President Kennedy's military advisor, for a means whereby the USIB could systematically provide "early warning of developing 'cold war' crisis situations in any area of the world." It replaced the previous discussion of "Sensitive Situations" as a regular item on the USIB weekly agenda. The latter kind of discussion had been of a highly informal type, with no advance staff preparation or published result. The Survey was published weekly for a little over a year, being terminated in October 1962 by agreement of the Director, Mr. Bundy, and General Taylor.

2. The Survey was a coordinated document, with the Board of National Estimates acting as executive agent; within CIA; material was prepared by the ONE staff, by the Office of Current Intelligence, and occasionally by the DD/P. Occasional contributions were also received from the various USIB Agencies. Representatives of the latter met weekly with CIA people, under the

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chairmanship of a member of the Board of National Estimates, to perfect a text which received USIB consideration and was published the following day -- copies going to a large list of addressees in both national and departmental policymaking and intelligence quarters.

3. The Survey held to a principle of ~~quite~~ rigid economy and selectivity of topics -- under an injunction from General Taylor (who proved to be the main interested consumer) not to point the gun in too many directions. Its art form was a blend of the short current intelligence piece and a junior estimate -- the whole no more than a short paragraph or two at most, confining itself to main essential facts and judgments. Running estimative commentary on still critical situations was kept up to date each week in an Annex; and situations which ceased ^{to be} being critical were dropped from the publication.

4. Virtues and Faults. The Survey scored certain predictive successes, anticipating critical developments in a number of situations, and permitting frequent coordinated estimative commentary without gearing up the machinery for an SNIE. For the most part, however, similar anticipations of such situations were expressed more or less concurrently in the Central Intelligence Bulletin and often, speaking of the longer range view, in past national estimates.

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Thus the Survey seldom contained much that was new to regular readers of other national intelligence publications. Moreover, by the time it was drafted (on Mondays), coordinated (on Tuesdays), and approved by USIB and published (on Wednesdays), any really hot items were normally familiar to important readers.

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